

Tom Horne
Superintendent

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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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**ARIZONA SCHOOLS CHIEF TOM HORNE ANNOUNCES CONFERENCE
HIGHLIGHTING BEST PRACTICES TO INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**
ASU AND ADE HOST MARCH 26-27, 2007

PHOENIX (Tuesday, March 6, 2007) -- The Arizona Department of Education, in conjunction with Arizona State University, will host *Determined to Succeed: Stories of School Improvement*, a conference highlighting 20 of Arizona's "best-in-class" schools, as found in a recent study by ASU and ADE researchers. The March 26th-27th conference at the Sheraton Airport Hotel in Tempe will introduce benchmarking as a school improvement tool, and is open to all K-12 educators. Benchmarking is the process of matching schools with the highest performing peers of similar characteristics in order to identify and replicate effective practices.

The 20 best-in-class schools including both district and charter schools were identified in a comprehensive benchmarking study by Prism Decision Systems, LLC with assistance from Arizona State University. The benchmarking study analyzed three years of AIMS assessment results for Arizona schools reporting grade 3, grade 8, and grade 10 AIMS results. The analysis determined how well schools produce AIMS results for their levels of poverty and English language learners. Those schools that had the highest performance for their levels of poverty and English language learners were considered benchmark schools.

"Arizona educators want to know what higher performing schools are doing so they can reproduce those effective practices in their schools," said Schools Chief Tom Horne. "Benchmarking is an improvement discipline that will provide us the framework to do just that. It allows Arizona schools to find peers with similar demographics whose students are making significant gains in academic performance."

The conference is designed to answer these requests. 20 best-in-class schools will present the programs, strategies, and practices that contribute to their success, and offer insights to lower performing schools with similar characteristics. These 20 schools represent diverse urban, suburban, and rural demographics with wide ranges of poverty and English language learner populations.

All Arizona schools with complete data sets over a selected three-year span were included in the study. Final participation included 801 third grade, 415 eighth grade, and 377

tenth grade schools spanning across all of Arizona. Over 90 of these schools received benchmark status and 20 were then selected to present best practices at the conference.

All conference attendees will receive a customized list of benchmark peers that can be used to compare academic data and effective practices.

The 20 benchmark schools selected to present at the *Determined to Succeed Conference* include:

Alhambra Traditional School- Alhambra Elementary District
Anasazi Elementary School- Scottsdale Unified
Arcadia High School- Scottsdale Unified
Arizona School For The Arts- Phoenix Charter
Balsz Elementary School- Balsz Elementary District
Big Park Community School- Sedona-Oak Creek Unified
Cheyenne Traditional School- Scottsdale Unified
Dateland Elementary School- Hyder Elementary District
Glendale High School- Glendale Union High School District
Hollinger Elementary School- Tucson Unified
Horizon Elementary School- Glendale Elementary District
John M. Anderson Elementary School- Chandler Unified
Larkspur Elementary School- Paradise Valley Unified
Luz Academy- Tucson Charter
Pueblo Gardens- Tucson Unified
Silvestre S. Herrera- Phoenix Elementary
Stevenson Elementary School- Douglas Unified
Sunnyslope High School- Glendale Union High School District
Washington High School- Glendale Union High School District
Wilson Elementary School- Wilson Elementary District

“We are always looking to Arizona educators for answers to Arizona’s challenges in education. This conference provides one more way for the Department of Education to identify our most successful teachers and administrators and showcase the strategies that work to raise achievement.” said Tom Horne. “These schools have maintained high expectations for all of their students to succeed. It will be great to have them share their robust stories of school improvement with others throughout the state.”

For more information on the *Determined to Succeed* conference, visit the Arizona Department of Education web site at: www.ade.az.gov or call 602-364-2066.

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